

Greetings Representative Horn, Representative Osten, & Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

My name is Sarah Dana, a current resident in Hartford, proudly born and raised in Bridgeport, CT. I am an MSW candidate at the UConn School of Social Work, with a concentration on community organizing. I write to all of you, in support of SB-217, and recommendations for the bill. Hate crimes are on a continual rise in Connecticut, according to FBI statistics. As we continue to live through the pandemic, COVID-19 and the impact it created has only exacerbated these statistics, which is a concern for marginalized communities who are susceptible to such hate crimes.

According to the data from the FBI, in 2020, there were about 101 reported hate crime incidents, compared to reported 76 in 2019. Keep in mind, these numbers only represent reported data. Hate crimes against the Black community, in particular, have risen nationwide from 1,930 in 2019, to 2,755 in 2020. In Connecticut, 41% of the 101 reported hate crimes were against my community. These staggering numbers are a huge concern for me, as a Black, Haitian American Woman, given that these identities put me at risk.

In addition to hate crimes that continue to rise against my community, misogynoir is a significant problem that Black women and girls have to face every day. According to the FBI statistics, Black women and girls are killed every 5 and a half hours, the rates have continued to increase every year—and the pandemic has only continued to worsen these statistics. Unfortunately, the violence that we, as Black women, continue to face are disregarded, not only in the media, but within the general public, the government, and even in our own communities that are supposed to be our kin. The names of Black women and girls that go missing are often unrecognized, and as a result, it gives a grim reality on how our cries for help go unnoticed.

While I do support SB-217, I would like this bill to address a community-action model, where there are special units tailored to each marginalized communities' need within a city or town. I believe having this unit within the State Police would be too broad to individually address, connect, and essentially build trust with

communities that are most affected by hate crimes. Overall, I want to ensure that my community can and will be safe against the senseless acts of violence that continue to plague us. We want to feel secure, protected, and safe within our communities. I ask that you pass SB-217, with these suggestions in mind, to ensure our communities are provided the safety and protection that we need and deserve in Connecticut.

Thank you everyone for your time.

Sarah Dana